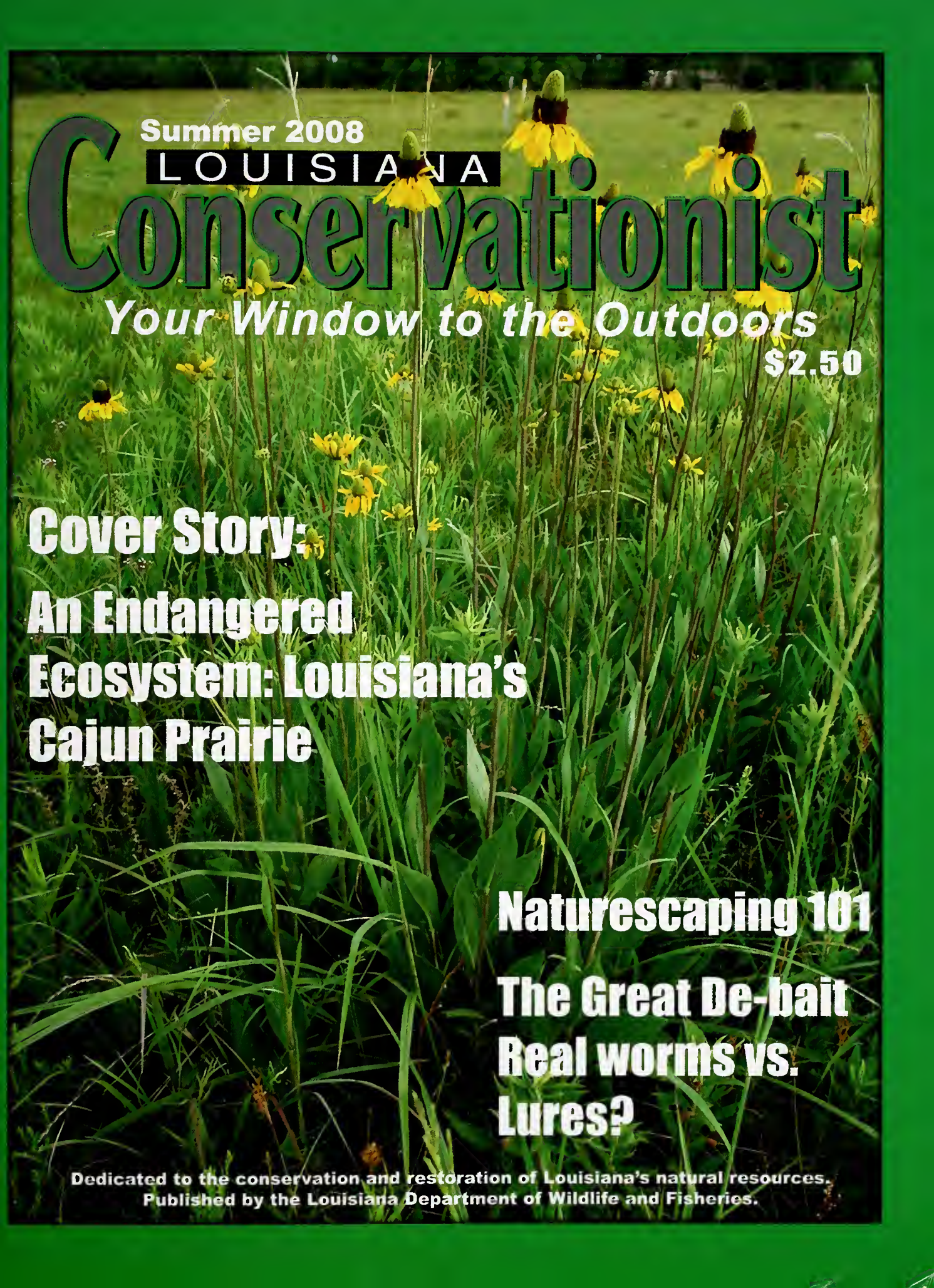


The background of the cover is a photograph of a lush green field filled with tall, thin stalks of grass and numerous yellow wildflowers with dark brown centers. The scene is captured in a slightly soft-focus manner, emphasizing the natural beauty of the prairie.

Summer 2008

LOUISIANA

Conservationist

Your Window to the Outdoors

\$2.50

Cover Story:

**An Endangered
Ecosystem: Louisiana's
Cajun Prairie**

Naturescaping 101

**The Great De-bait
Real worms vs.
Lures?**

Dedicated to the conservation and restoration of Louisiana's natural resources.
Published by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.



Comments

Robert Barham, Secretary

In this age of specialized communications there are Web sites, radio talk shows, cable TV networks and still a good number of print publications dedicated to the great outdoors. If you bird watch, camp out, fish, hunt, kayak, mountain bike, mountain climb, scuba dive, tie flies, gig frogs - whatever - there's information out there tailored to your special interest.

As a subscriber to *Louisiana Conservationist*, you obviously have an interest in this state's natural resources and what this agency is doing to pre-

serve and protect Louisiana's natural habitats and wildlife for future generations. This department, like fish and game agencies nationwide, needs your support provided through license sales, memberships in conservation groups that work toward the same mission we serve, and volunteer efforts such as the Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program, Keep Louisiana Beautiful and Step Outside Day.

Even if you are not a member of a conservation organization and prefer not to get involved in volunteer efforts with specific commitments, you can still assist us by introducing someone to that window of the outdoor world that you know.

You may have intermediate to expert fishing skills and time during summer months to take someone fishing. If that person is under 16 years of age, no fishing license is required. Use the opportunity to hand down that extra rod and reel you no longer use or need.

If you can create enthusiasm in a young potential angler, most surveys indicate such an interest will remain as that child gets older. The lure of modern day entertainment options keeps many more young people indoors these days than previous generations. In many instances, all it takes is an opportunity presented by a caring adult. With all the investments that are made in state and parish parks, owning a boat is not even a necessity to enjoy angling. With the great number of piers and banks throughout the state, fishing opportunities are numerous.

If photography is your passion, visit a wildlife management area or wildlife refuge and take someone on a hunt to capture that next prize photo. Digital photography allows image review without the cost of film processing and novices can capture images by the dozens for picking the best of the best after time spent outdoors.

The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries maintains facilities which offer outdoor access for beginners and those simply interested in getting away from phones and e-mails. Waddill Wildlife Refuge in Baton Rouge and Woodworth Outdoor Education Center south of Alexandria provide pond fishing and target shooting opportunities. Sherburne Wildlife Management Area on the northern edge of the Atchafalaya Basin offers non-consumptive opportunities such as the annual wood stork/wading bird event, set for July 19.

Outdoor education will always be an important component of Wildlife and Fisheries' conservation responsibilities, and we will continue to support aquatic education, outdoor programs for families and youth hunting opportunities. But we can only touch a limited number of people each year.

Encouraging interest in the outdoors is something you can do within the home, the extended family or the neighborhood. Become a mentor. You may spark interest in someone who becomes a sports license holder later in life and you will have helped support the hard work of this agency's dedicated conservationists.

Robert Barham



Louisiana Conservationist
ISSN 0024-6778
Volume 61 No. 3
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

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Louisiana Conservationist (USPS #320-300) is published quarterly by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, 225/ 765-2918. Periodical postage paid at Baton Rouge, LA and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: send address changes to *Louisiana Conservationist*, P.O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898.

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This public document was published at an average cost of \$11,539.39. Approximately 18,650 copies of this document were published at an average printing cost of \$11,539.39. The total cost of all printing of this document averages \$11,539.39. This document was published for Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 70808, by LSU Printing Services, to provide information on outdoor opportunities in Louisiana. This material was printed in accordance with the standards for printing by state agencies established pursuant to R.S. 43:31. Printing of this material was purchased in accordance with the provisions of Title 43 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes.

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Louisiana's Cajun Prairie: An Endangered Ecosystem

Story by
Fred KIMMEL

Photo by John Pitre Natural Resources Conservation Service

Prairie phlox flower
(*Plox pilosa*)



Photo by Larry Alain USGS National Wetlands Resource Center

Imagine the scene described by Samuel Lockett around 1870, "these prairies are all vast, treeless expanses, covered with a luxuriant growth of grass." It may come as a surprise that the scene described was not in Oklahoma or Kansas, but in southwest Louisiana. Until about 150 years ago, this prairie covered nearly 2.5 million acres in Louisiana and 6.5 million acres in coastal Texas. Mr. Lockett went on to say, "Altogether I look upon the prairie region as naturally the loveliest part of Louisiana." The prairie of Louisiana is known as the Gulf Coastal Prairie, or informally, as the Cajun Prairie. In Louisiana, the Cajun Prairie extended from the Sabine River to the west, the Atchafalaya bottomlands to the east, the pine woodland to the north and the coastal marshes to the south. The map of this region is dotted with names like Prairie de Femmes, Prairie Laurent,

and Prairie Ronde, serving as a testament to the landscape that greeted the first settlers.

The Cajun Prairie was characterized by relatively flat terrain that was treeless except for forested areas along streams and rivers known as "gallery forests." Trees were limited to gallery forests because the soils beyond the waterways consisted of heavy clay, not favorable for tree development. Another important factor that limited tree growth on the prairies was the frequent fires ignited by lightning and native people.

Although relatively flat, the Cajun Prairie is not without interesting geological features. Unique to the Cajun Prairie are mounds of well-drained soil 3 to 7 feet high and 30-50 feet in diameter known as "pimple mounds." Pimple mounds occur only on prairie soils called alphasols, but their origin is

not known. There are also low areas or depressions forming natural wetlands throughout the prairie.

Unfortunately, many of us are conditioned to view a landscape without trees as somehow lacking. However, when it comes to the Cajun Prairie, nothing could be further from the truth. Over 500 species of plants have been identified in the Cajun Prairie. The dominant vegetation of the prairies are grasses such as switchgrass, little bluestem, big bluestem and Indian grass. Common grasses in Cajun Prairie that don't occur in other tallgrass prairies include brownseed paspalum, Gulf Coast muhly, and slender bluestem. Among the grasses grow a diverse array of wildflowers such as prairie coneflower, blazing star, compass plant and butterfly weed.

The wildlife of the Cajun Prairie reflects its diverse vegetation. Bison, red wolves, whooping cranes and prairie chickens were once found on the prairies of Louisiana. These species are now gone, but the area remains home to a wide variety of grassland birds, waterfowl and shorebirds. In addition, over 100 species of butterflies and skippers and 86 species of dragonflies have been found in the Cajun Prairie.

The prairie landscape described by Samuel Lockett can no longer be found in Louisiana. Of the 2.5 million acres of historic Cajun Prairie, only less than 1,000, in its natural condition, can be found today. The Cajun Prairie was settled during the late 1800s and was gradually converted to pasture and agriculture uses. Today, the few remaining intact patches are found along railroad rights-of-ways and other isolated areas that were not plowed. The Gulf Coastal Prairie ecosystem is considered one of the most imperiled ecosystems not only in Louisiana, but globally as well.

For years, a few dedicated conservationists have labored in relative obscu-

rity to preserve remnants of the Cajun Prairie. There have also been efforts to collect seed or sod from prairie remnants and use it to reestablish prairie land. However, because adequate seed was lacking and restoration was so labor intensive, efforts of large scale prairie restoration have not been attempted in Louisiana, but that is changing.

One of the biggest obstacles to prairie restoration efforts has been the lack of suitable seed. Seeds of prairie species are available from growers in the midwestern U.S. and great plains region. However, experience has shown that plants grown from these seed sources do not persist in south Louisiana. Plants from the Midwest and Great Plains can not adapt to the humidity, rainfall, growing season, and soils found in southern Louisiana. To address this, several groups interested in prairie and grassland restoration formed the Louisiana Native Plant Initiative (LNPI). LNPI volunteers and partners collect seeds from prairie plants on remaining tracts and then grow the seeds in a nursery setting. When enough seed is grown, the seed will be released to commercial growers to produce Louisiana adapted seed for the commercial market.

Another obstacle facing prairie restoration efforts in Louisiana is the need for specialized planting equipment. Many of the prairie grasses have very fluffy seeds that cannot be effectively planted with conventional seed drills. While broadcast seeders have been effective, success requires extensive seedbed preparation that is often cost prohibitive. To complicate matters, other

A skipper butterfly (*Thymelicus sylvestris*) resting on a rattlesnake flower (*Brazoria truncata*).



Photo by Larry Allan USGS National Wetlands Resource Center



Photo courtesy of U.S. Forest Service

Northern bobwhite quails (*Colinus virginianus*) are one of the many species that live on the Cajun Prairie.

native seeds are hard, but very small and should be planted at low seeding rates. To address this need, three drills capable of simultaneously planting fluffy seed and small hard seed at very low rates were purchased and are available for rental by land managers in Louisiana.

While prairie restoration and grassland revegetation methods are well-established in much of the nation, they are relatively new in Louisiana. As a consequence, most of the natural resource professionals that landowners traditionally seek for guidance and assistance are unfamiliar with grassland restoration. The Acadiana Grassland Restoration Initiative

(AGRI) is a project now in development that will provide Louisiana's natural resource professionals training and experience in prairie and grassland planting and management. In addition the AGRI will provide "turn-key" grassland and prairie planting services to landowners.

The restoration progress will be for naught unless landowners are interested and willing to dedicate por-

tions of their land to grassland and prairie. While a few who appreciate the intrinsic value of the Cajun Prairie will be willing and financially able to do so, many more will require financial incentives. Fortunately, there are several programs that offer cost-share assistance for prairie and grassland restoration. There are also a couple of programs that offer rental payments in addition to cost-share payments. Most notably is the newly approved Gulf Coast Prairies SAFE Project. SAFE, State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement, is part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The Gulf Coast Prairie SAFE Project will target 3,500 acres in portions of southwest Louisiana for restoration of prairie vegetation and associated wetlands. In addition, a similar project targeting 28,000 acres is under consideration.

While it would be ideal to restore the natural plant diversity of the Cajun Prairie, for now, restoration efforts in Louisiana will have to take a pragmatic approach. Locally adapted native prairie seed sources are not yet available. Therefore, these early prairie restoration efforts in Louisiana will utilize only the few species of plants that are commercially available, thus more closely resembling a grassland planting

Photo by Larry Allain USGS National Wetlands Resource Center

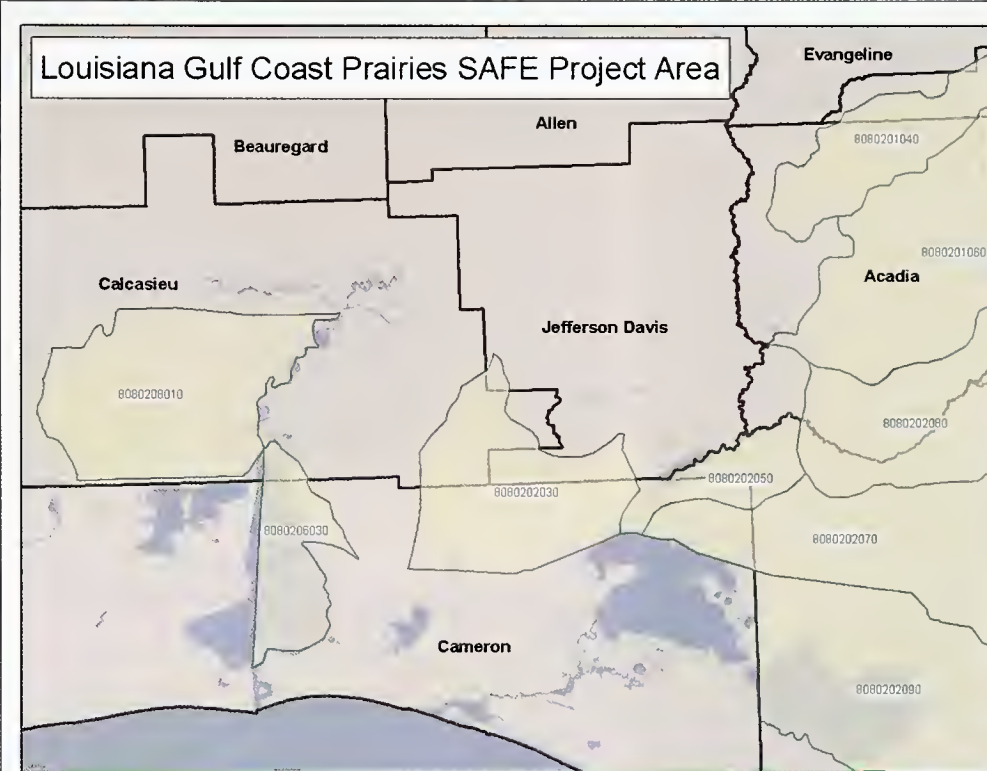


Kansas blazing star (*Liatris pycnostachya*) on prairie remnant.

rather than true prairie restoration. As seeds of locally adapted native prairie species become available, these plantings can begin to resemble a natural community and a true prairie restoration. However, even rudimentary restoration work will benefit a wide array of wildlife dependent on grassland habitat. Species such as mottled ducks, bobwhite quail, Henslow's sparrows and Le Conte's sparrows will benefit. Perhaps someday even whooping cranes and prairie chickens will again call Louisiana home. 🐾

Gulf Coast Prairies SAFE

The Gulf Coast Prairies SAFE is a conservation reserve program aimed at restoring a minimum of 3,500 acres of native grasslands and shallow water habitats in southwest Louisiana. This project is limited to the selected watersheds depicted on the map below.



For more information on Louisiana's coastal prairie visit the following web sites:

nwrc.usgs.gov/prairie/
acadianaarcd.com
cajunprairie.org

The LDWF Private Lands Program biologists in the Lake Charles (337-751-2575) or Opelousas (337-948-0255) offices are also able to provide information and assistance to land managers interested in prairie restoration or native grassland establishment.

Fred Kimmel is upland game program manager with LDWF. He is a frequent contributor with Louisiana Conservationist.

To be eligible, land within the selected watersheds must meet the basic program requirements, including that it must have been planted in an agricultural commodity in four of the six years between 1996 and 2001. SAFE participants will be encouraged to establish a mix of native grasses and legumes. In addition, shallow water areas may be created on portions of the land.

SAFE participants will receive the following payments:

- \$100 per acre sign-up incentive
- Up to 90 percent of the cost of installing the conservation practices
- Up to 15 years of annual land rental payments
- Up to 50 percent of the cost of mid-contract management practices

The Gulf Coast Prairie SAFE is a continuous sign-up program so landowners can apply at anytime rather than waiting for an announced CRP sign-up period. For more information contact your local USDA Service Center. LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries private lands biologists in Lake Charles (337-751-2575) or Opelousas (337-948-0255) can also provide information and assistance.



Turkey Hunting Dad Would Have Loved It

The woods had been silent for about 10 minutes so, I decided to test the water and made a loud yelp on my box call. I waited a few seconds and then cranked another “I’m over here” yelp from the handcrafted call made from the wood of a black cherry tree. I bought the call many years ago but it never yelped the call I needed to be successful in catching a turkey. Earlier in the morning a tom, mimicking the sound of a Jake, had been gobbling at me from the northwest. Before setting up my blind chair in the Deer Turnip Patch, which is now turned Turkey Patch, I thought I heard a good gobble east of me. I was sitting in the chair facing south and I figured the young gobbler would come in on the trail from the west. That was the trail the birds had been using during the deer season.

Suddenly, the distinct sound of heavy wings flying down to my left put me on alert. Initially, I thought it was the hen that had sailed in above me from the roost on opening day. She had responded to my soft tree yelps produced by the wing bone call. I was glancing off to the right, waiting to see a Jake, when another familiar sound from my left caught my attention. It was the sound of a drumming tom, and as I turned my head to the left a strutting longbeard stepped out of the pine plantation. It was an awesome sight of colors: the blue head with blood red carbuncles (wattles) contrasted sharply with the dark black body of the tom. The beard stuck out from its body and appeared to be eight or more inches in length. The tom was only 15 yards away but I could not move the gun to the left for a shot out of the window. My heart was beating wildly as I watched the tom in full strut slowly work his way toward the two decoys in front of me. It was then for some reason I began to reflect on my memories as a child.

I grew up in the southern end of Webster Parish and never saw a wild turkey. The

habitat was great. There were good stands of mixed pine and hardwood timber with plenty of oak and beech mast. My dad worked for ArkLa Gas and traveled around the rural parishes of northwest Louisiana. He would come home and tell me about the wildlife creatures he saw. In fact, as time passed, and I matured, he would often pick up road kill specimens for me. But he never encountered a turkey. My friends that I hunted with never said anything about seeing turkeys either. The 1947 LDWF turkey publication written by F.D. Hollis noted that the last known record of turkeys in Webster Parish was in 1925.

Eventually, I did have the opportunity to see turkeys on a few field trips in college but it wasn't until I went to work for the Louisiana Wildlife Fisheries Commission in 1976 in south-east Louisiana that I really became involved with the Eastern Wild Turkey from a management and hunting standpoint. At that time, the turkey population in the Florida parishes was excellent, probably the best in the state. I regularly encountered birds on my travels throughout the region and with my work on Pearl River Wildlife Management Area. The area supervisor was Al Frierson, and he introduced me to turkey hunting. My hunting success was poor at first, but then I began to get better at talking turkey.

As district supervisor, I coordinated the state turkey restoration program in the area along with assisting several turkey research projects in the 1980s. All of this added to my knowledge and understanding of this fine game bird that was absent from the woods of my youth.

Unfortunately, my dad never was able to come and hunt with me during the spring season. The turkey population in northwest Louisiana was still poor, so I never went up there to hunt turkeys. However, a major restocking effort was again initiated for northwest Louisiana in the '80s and this time it worked. Some releases were made in

the 1960s and 1970s but were not successful. So what happened that made our restocking efforts in the '80s work? I posed that question to Larry Savage, the turkey biologist for LDWF, and his response was immediate and to the point. Locked gates and improved public

attitude were the key ingredients to the success of the releases made in the 1980s. Human activities associated with open land hunting kept releases from taking hold. He went on to say that habitat quality is being reduced due to habitat fragmentation and is a threat to the turkey population in much of the state today.

Dan Dennett, a veteran biologist with the department, was the first turkey study biologist for the department and coordinated the restocking effort in the early '80s. Dennett worked in the Ferriday region and was experienced with the needs and management of this important game bird. He later wrote the publication, *A Guide to Managing the Wild Turkey in Louisiana*, which was published by the Twin City Longbeards Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf). When Dennett retired, Danny Timmer became the turkey biologist for the state.



Photo courtesy of David Moreland

Dan Dennett prepares to band a wild turkey hen that is being held by wildlife specialist Lloyd Cutrer.

NWTF provided assistance to the department with this restocking effort. The job now is to maintain good habitat conditions for turkeys in an effort to sustain these populations that have developed as a result of the restocking work. Of particular importance is the management of the annual spring harvest. The new deer and turkey tagging program is now working and turkey tagging will be mandatory in 2009. For the first time ever, biologist will know how many toms are being harvested in the state and where the harvest is occurring. This will greatly aid biologist with their management work.



Moreland sets his sights on a gobbler.

Photo courtesy of David Moreland

One of the highlights of my wildlife career was my involvement with the state wild turkey restocking program. From 1983 to 1991, during my time as district supervisor, more than 100 turkeys were trapped in our district and released in north Louisiana. I take much pride with our work and effort with this important program and the fact that our efforts helped to re-populate that part of the state where I grew up. Today, the focus of the turkey management program in this region and across the state is to maintain productive habitat conditions and management of the annual harvest.

By the early '90s, during the time hunting season was open in northwest Louisiana my dad was not able to hunt due to his poor health. He loved duck hunting and especially enjoyed walking along Carter Creek and jump shooting wood ducks. This was a great hardwood drain and no doubt would have been ideal habitat for turkeys. Dad grew up in rural Caddo Parish and his

Mom and Dad raised ducks and geese. He could make a pretty good mallard call with just his voice, and I know he would have loved to sit in the woods and listen to the gobbling and yelping that goes along with turkey hunting. He was a real good craftsman and I am certain he would have made a few turkey calls of his own. His double barrel 16 gauge sits in my memento and artifacts cabinet. How sweet it would have been if he had killed a tom with that gun.

Instead of the old double barrel, I was holding my old Westernfield bolt-action 20 gauge. This was my first gun that Mom and Dad gave me one Christmas. I know my dad picked it out because it was a good first gun, somewhat like a single shot but with the clip provided additional ammo fairly quickly, a top thumb safety, and the old C-Lect choke that was now set on full choke. I have killed doves, woodcock, snipe, quail, ducks, squirrel, rabbits and deer with that gun but have never killed a turkey with it. But that was about to change. The gobbler finally strutted in front of me to where I could put the crosshair of the scope on him. As it went into a somewhat half-strut, exposing the neck and head, I squeezed the trigger and the tom dropped in its tracks. The 3-inch load of number four shot at 20 yards was more than adequate. There was no sound of a flopping bird on the ground, just the wild beating of my heart as I sat there and took in the moment. There is no doubt that Dad would have loved it also! Maybe next time I will bring the double-barrel 16 with me. 🦃

*David Moreland is a former biologist and administrator with LDWF. **Outdoor Roots** is his regular column in Louisiana Conservationist.*



As the worm turns

Photographs and Story by
MarySYRETT

Illustrations by
KimLEVY-MARCELLE

When God created the humble worm, he surely did so knowing that the creature was a blessed gift to anglers. Those among you who doubt that the worm is a divine creation, consider a profound yet sometimes forgotten truth: worms are an ideal fish bait in Louisiana and most everywhere else.

If you fish only a few times a year, surely you have been in a situation where you spotted a big fish cruising in the margins of a lake, pond or bayou. What was the first thing you did? Fumble around in your tackle box searching for that forgotten 'incredible' lure that "Uncle Benoit" promised you "will always bring the big ones in," or start digging around in the good earth with your fingernails while lifting up old logs or much older rocks? Why do I ask? Because if there is one bait that will get that big one to bite, it's more than likely a worm. Cursing the fact that you forgot (again!) to bring any with you, chances are you'd sell your grandmother for one big lobbie that wasn't around when you really needed it.

Many old-time Louisiana anglers fish with live bait. Not only do such anglers choose live bait, but they choose to use a particular kind more than any other. We're talking W-O-R-M-S. There are different species of worms, but the point is, when it comes to live fishing bait, many anglers who have been around the block once or twice, sooner or later think of worms.

Rightly so, seeing as how fish of all kinds enjoy devouring worms for breakfast, lunch or dinner (metaphorically speaking, of course). An angler would be hard pressed to find a fish that doesn't appreciate a tasty worm.

There are many types of fishing worms. The *dendrobeana* are the most popular worms used by Louisiana anglers. They are lively and wriggle like no other fishing worm. By doing so they attract a variety of fish species and can survive in cool waters for a long time. Small *dendrobeana* worms are ideal for pond and small stream fishing. Medium-size ones attract carp and big bream. Bass of all types and sizes seem to be forever hungry for *dendrobeanas*.

The best thing about this type of fishing worm is that they are easy to care for, provided they are kept in a good-size container that has air holes and moist bedding, and are kept out of direct sunlight. If properly attended to, *dendrobeana* worms can easily survive for two weeks.

Lobworms are the biggest fishing worms available and are often found in home gardens. When skillet-size fish are your target, lobbies, also known as night-

crawlers, are an ideal bait. Wherever you find receding floodwaters, fish enthusiastically seek out this worm. Those fish include perch, carp, bream, bass and catfish.

Red fishing worms are smaller than *den-drobeana* and make ideal bait for perch, carp and bream.

Live bait can be purchased at any Louisiana bait shop or, better still, an angler can get out of the house and find his or her own. Compare the cost of losing one worm to losing one artificial lure and you'll quickly realize that fishing with live bait is far less expensive than fishing with lures.

Catching worms to use as fish bait isn't difficult. Nightcrawlers thrive in warm, moist earth or other areas where compost is abundant. Nightcrawlers come out most often at night and can be located using a dim light source such as a flashlight with a plastic cover. Look for nightcrawlers under vegetation, around compost piles and any place that is damp. When you locate one, grasp and pull upwards using gentle pressure until the worm is dislodged from its hole.

The best way to keep worms alive is with compost or peat, mixed with dirt. Using one-third amount of dirt and two-thirds of peat or compost mixture works fine in a 3' by 2' by 2' foot box. An angler

can keep 500 nightcrawlers in a box that size. Cool and damp areas are key in keeping healthy worms.

Ice cubes are a must when transporting worms on an extended fishing trip. Try this on your next Louisiana outdoor adventure: In the center of a bait box, clear a space in the bedding. Next, fill a glass jar with ice cubes, screw the top back on and put in a plastic bag. Then, place the container in the center of the box and push bedding soil around it. The ice will keep the soil cool and moist, and the soil will stay that way until the cubes melt. In hot weather, worms will crowd around the jar.

For many anglers, the technique used for fishing with worms never changes. Most grab a worm and thread it onto a large hook, or they hook a worm over and over, creating a worm ball. And because fish enjoy devouring tasty worms, these methods certainly work well for catching some fish. But keep in mind, to present a worm in a completely natural way not only means more fish caught, but it also means catching bigger fish that fit ever-so-neatly into a skillet.

How does one go about presenting a live worm in a natural manner? By using gang hooks, which are two small hooks tied in a

Gang Hook

Use a gang hook, which typically has several points

Place hook through center of large band located 2/3 way up the worm's body

Use a bobber

Be sure to place bobber 18-36 inches above the hook

tandem. Gang hooks are the ideal way to present a live worm to fish. Because the hooks are smaller, they are less visible to fish, and many fish are more tempted to bite. If you use live fishing bait, especially worms, gang hooks should be a part of your fishing arsenal.

When fishing with worms, the hooks should be placed through the center of the large band located approximately two-thirds the way up on a worm's body. The band will appear as a ring of flesh separating the lower portion of the worm from the upper part. You can use a bobber when fishing with worms, with the bobber placed 18 to 36 inches above the hook. Some anglers let out about ten feet of line and then gently toss the hooked worm under a large tree overlooking the water, boat dock or other shaded cover. Let the worm sink naturally to the bottom, slowly reeling it in until you feel a strike.

Many Louisiana anglers who use worms employ techniques similar to what they used when they were kids. For example, consider the act of carrying worms with you while fishing for bass, catfish, crappie or carp. Many anglers buy a cheap cardboard container full of worms at a bait shop and then carry it with them for hours on end while fishing ever-so-hopefully for supper. This technique, while seemingly logical, is inefficient and can result in used-up, unsightly worm containers being left all along bayous, ponds and streams.

Anglers now can use a worm bait bag which can be purchased in many sporting good stores. An angler, just before starting to fish, simply removes worms from a cardboard container and places them in the bait bag. Using this technique, fishing worms are literally at one's fingertips all the time, thereby eliminating the need to carry throwaway containers.

When you hit a lake, stream or pond in Louisiana, do you want to fool fish time and again and then finish the day off with a delicious fish fry? Then make certain you bring along worms. Many anglers, myself included, began their fishing careers with these noodles of fish-attracting wonder. But for some strange reason, many people move on and cast the incredible worm aside in favor of a mind-blowing array of plastics, flies, plugs, and whatever else is the "in" fishing thing today.



Photo by Doug Stamm

Can an angler catch more fish in a day using artificial fishing lures? Maybe. Maybe not. In many instances, where we're inclined to cast fancy lures on the water carrying such slogan as "Guaranteed Fish-Attracting, Super-Size Artificial Lure," fish, when they are hungry, are really seeking old-fashioned, delicious-looking earthworms. You may just find there is no better way to fill up a cooking skillet on a warm summer evening than fish that have been caught on a worm. 🪱

Largemouth bass
(*Micropterus salmoides*)

Mary Syrett is a freelance photographer and writer. She is a new contributor to Louisiana Conservationist.



ATTACK IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Story and Photographs by
BethYOKUM

Are you fit enough for your next hunt?

When a hunter or outdoorsmen leaves his home to enjoy some time with nature, there are important safeguards they must bring along to help protect themselves from the harsh outdoor elements. Of course, some essential items would include food and water, perhaps a compass, or GPS unit. But there are some things brought on such excursions that are not so tangible. In fact, there may be some things that we are not cognizant of, such as, fear, excitement, anxiousness and adrenaline. These emo-

tions coupled with a lack of physical fitness can prove to be disastrous, especially to hunters and outdoors enthusiasts who may not be able to receive timely medical treatment.

With all of the stresses that hunting and outdoors activities put on the body, physical fitness and proper diet are essential factors in preparing for your next big hunt or outdoors function. Although heart attacks have no delivery date, there are measures that individuals may take to help prevent a heart attack or stroke.

As summer and early fall approach, many hunters are making plans and final preparations for out-of-state hunts. Hunters will be headed north and west for elk, moose, caribou and other species found only in rugged backcountry mountains and tundra. These trips have been carefully planned and booked far in advance. Hunters have scrimped and saved hard earned dollars and paid for once in a lifetime hunts. Substantial investments have been made in firearms, clothing, and travel in addition to guide and outfitter fees and licenses.

Ironically, so many hunters overlook personal investment in physical fitness. "Flat-landers" from Louisiana's average 40 feet above sea-level elevation find themselves a little short of breath when stepping off the plane in Denver. How do you think it will feel at 10,000 feet hiking uphill to get to that meadow where the elk feed? What about that death march pace your young resident mountain guide will set closing the distance to a good bull before he walks over the ridge and out of your life? After a fast trot to get within range, will you be able to slow your breathing and recover from the exertion in time to make a descent shot?

After the first day of the hunt will you be too sore and exhausted to get going the next morning? While we can't acclimate to high altitudes and thin air at home, we can get in shape for long hikes while packing gear and harvested game.

A state of good physical fitness enables us to catch our breath quicker after those uphill climbs. We will also recover more rapidly from the day's exertions and demands on a backcountry hunt.

Every hunter must know their physical limitations and it is recommended that all hunters be in great physical shape. Hunting should be treated like any other professional sport; you must eat healthy and train hard to achieve a body worthy of



LDWF file photo

hunting. If you have been sedentary, or just out of shape, you must consult a physician before starting an exercise program.

Training your body is like fine tuning your hunting gear, you must spend time getting it just right. Starting an exercise and nutrition program is not an easy task. Start slow and work your way up. Anything accomplished for 21 days or more will become a habit and it will be easier to keep.

Hunting can put a lot of stress on the body. Factors such as falling while in remote areas, environmental stressors like heat, cold, wind, rain or snow, heavy clothes, heavy loads, and poor diet can all contribute to heart attacks.

Adam Einck trains his body by practicing climbing for his next hunt.

Prepare your body for hunting season

DIET

- Cut back on fat up to 30 percent or less of total calories.
- Keep dietary cholesterol intake less than 300 mg/day.
- Limit sodium intake to no more than 2,400 mg/day.
- Decrease alcohol consumption.
- Increase carbohydrate consumption.
- Protein intake should be 10 to 12 percent of total daily calories.
- Select lean meats and eat smaller portions (three to five ounces).
- Broil or bake foods instead of frying.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

- Stop smoking
- Practice stress management

According to the American College of Sports Medicine, heart disease is the number one killer among men and women in the United States. You are at risk if you smoke, are over 50, have poor nutrition, remain sedentary, and have high blood pressure. The great news is that you can change these risks factors by simply getting up and moving.

Remember to exercise and remain active. There are over 50 well-documented benefits from physical activity as well as aerobic exercise, resistance training, and flexibility work. According to a report from the Surgeon General on physical activity and health, "regular physical activity that is performed on most days of the week reduces the risk of developing or dying from some of the leading causes of illness and death in the United States."

So now you ask, how do I get started? Personal trainers are a great place to start. There is a wealth of informa-

tion to help you develop a program that is best for your lifestyle. If you don't prefer using a trainer, try to find a gym or having access to a home gym will work as well. Your goal should be to improve your endurance, strength, and flexibility. This will enable you to hike mountains and climb trees without getting winded.

Flexibility is very important in preventing injuries. Next, you should strength train on free weights. This mimics everyday pushing, pulling and reaching. Using machines to strength train is also ideal and will enable you to work out without a partner or spotter. This should be done 2-3 days a week. Next you should engage in cardio exercise such as biking, indoor cycling, walking or jogging. If you walk or jog on a treadmill, this should be done on an incline to try and mimic hiking up a mountain. Also using a stair climber, or elliptical is great for endurance training. Cardio should be done 3-5 days a week, for 30-45 min-



While lying on an exercise ball, Shane is using resistance to strengthen his core muscles and build balance in his abs and back.

In this exercise, Shane is simulating climbing. He is wearing a backpack to help strengthen his legs.



utes. Remember to mix your work out routines. Try to “confuse” your muscles by using different strength machines so you can continue to tear down and build muscle. Make sure to do a 5-10 minute warm up before you lift weights.

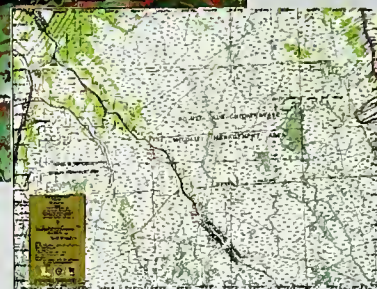
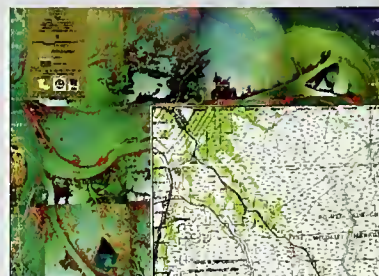
Also, try to walk on a terrain similar to what you will experience during the hunt. Try and carry a back pack that is weighted or buy a weighted vest to get accustomed to carrying gear, and gradually increase the distance until reaching the amount of exercise expected in the hunt. Remember you have to prepare your body to climb, hike, and carry heavy loads.

Being in great physical and mental shape will help you be the best hunter you can be; your arms will be strong and steady to hold a weapon and

make a clean shot. Your legs, core, back, and arms will be strong enough to carry out the animal you just killed, all of your gear, and to climb trees. Your heart and lungs will have the stamina to last on a long hunt, and to breathe in high altitudes. Remember to treat your body well, it is the only one you have. 🐾

Beth Yokum is a certified physical fitness trainer. This is her first contribution to Louisiana Conservationist.

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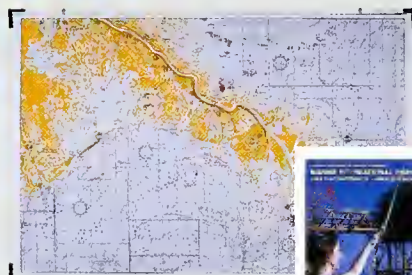
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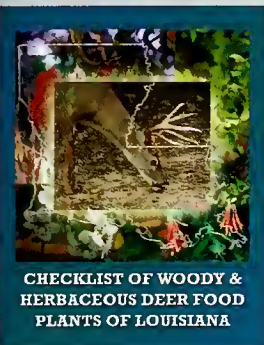
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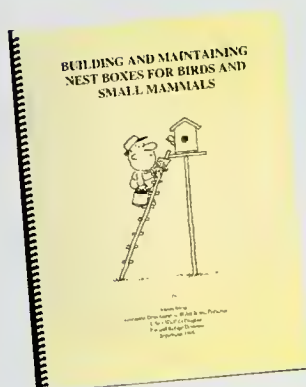


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Naturescaping:

Something new to write about

Story by
BetsyFRANZ

Photographs by
YvonneBORDELON

Anyone who has taken the steps to create a suitable 'wildlife habitat' within their landscape can attest to the fact that providing the four basic needs of food, water, shelter and places for wildlife to raise their young really works. It doesn't take long to see an increase in the number of butterflies, birds, bees, dragonflies and other garden visitors as a result of a well-planned habitat. Naturescaping is the term coined for such conservatory measures and there is a rising movement to increase such efforts in local communities.

But are these naturescaping techniques really making a difference? As a backyard naturalist, you have the opportunity to help prove that these techniques are improving backyard habitats.

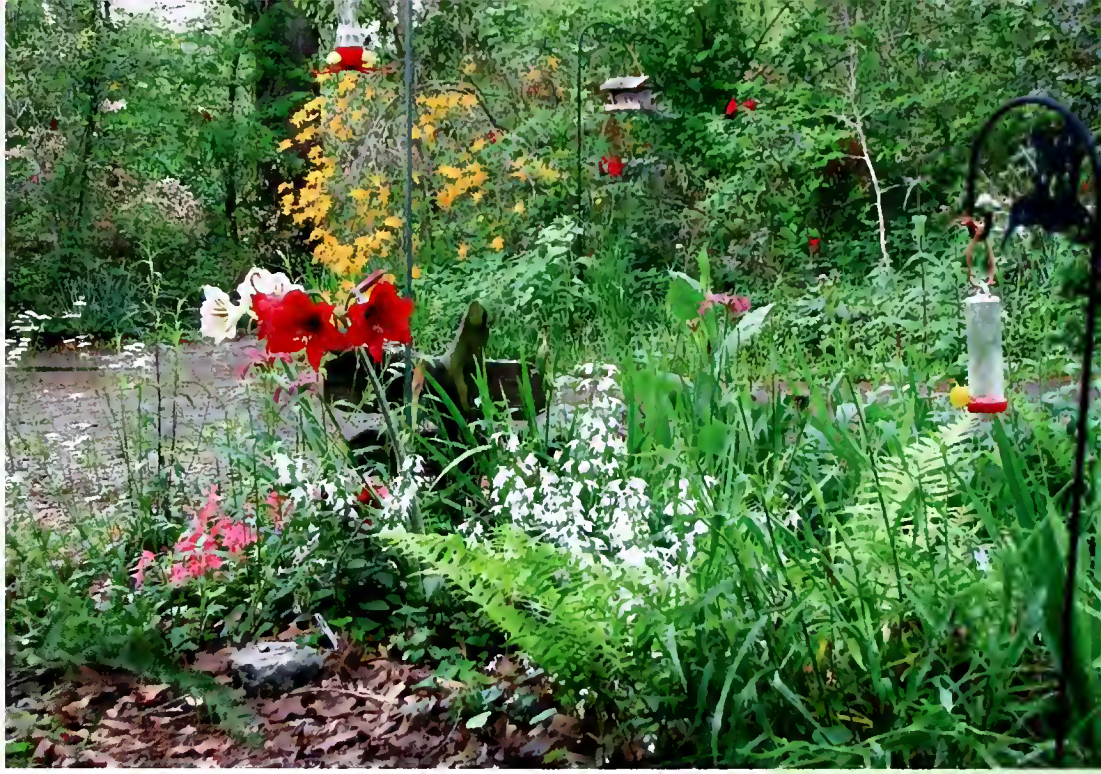
You may even discover something during your backyard observations that could help ensure the survival of a particular species in your own neighborhood and beyond. Yvonne Bordelon, president of the Folsom Native Plant Society and member of the Louisiana Native Plant society is an avid supporter of naturescaping. "There are many benefits of naturescaping," said Bordelon. "Since most native plants are drought resistant and are adapted to our climate, frequent watering is not necessary. Bordelon also mentioned the environmental benefits of naturescaping. "There is reduced run-off of fertilizers and pesticides because these are not needed in natural landscaping."

By creating a wildlife journal and sharing what you learn, your findings may become the deciding factor to convince naysayers in your community about the benefits of enhancing natural habitats.

Today, more people are beginning to take on the responsibility of sharing their landscapes with wildlife, but it is still a relatively new experience for most of them. "It is not as popular as it should be, but I think recently more people are getting interested in native, plants, naturescaping and sustainable gardening," said Bordelon.

There are measures that individuals can use to get excited about naturescaping. Creating a habitat journal can help you to create that place of enchantment. Using a habitat journal to record the steps during the creation of a wildlife habitat is the perfect way to learn what works and what doesn't. Structured wildlife accounts and on-line forums provide an easy means to share what is learned with others.

Also, there is no shortage in the



number of excellent books and government publications instructing and encouraging people to create wildlife habitats. But what seems to be lacking are the statistics to prove the effectiveness of these habitats. Although formal studies are rare, they do seem to indicate what backyard birders have known for decades: If you feed them, they will come.

In 2002, Southwest Texas State University graduate student Amanda

Naturescaped yard including native plants, scarlet sage, daisy fleabane, Gulf Coast penstemon, Louisiana iris, Southern shield fern. Amaryllis, petunias, and flame azalea are non-native to Louisiana.

Honeysuckle azaleas (pink to light pink on left and middle). Flame azaleas (orange-yellow on the right).



L. Hunter studied the effects of backyard habitats and presented her findings in her master's thesis entitled "Comparison of avian communities within traditional and wildscaped residential neighborhoods in San Antonio, Texas." This study shows how residential areas that incorporate natural landscapes into their design can attract a greater variety of birds than traditionally landscaped residential areas. These areas may provide valuable habitat for some declining species and reduce the impacts of residential development, especially where urbanization is encroaching on natural areas.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology calls people that share their backyard discoveries "citizen scientists", and finds their contributions invaluable in the study of bird populations and trends. They even feel that data from citizen scientists is helping researchers to investigate far-reaching questions such as the impacts of West Nile virus, global warming and acid rain on birds.

So, how do you collect your own habitat data? The best way is to keep

a habitat journal. Although keeping lists of the various species that visit your yard is great for participating in official wildlife counts, recording additional details of wildlife visits, such as which plants are favored, will go a long way in helping to create a more effective habitat. Journal entries will also allow you to better monitor the exciting progress of a butterfly from egg, to caterpillar, to chrysalis, to butterfly and will let you know when to re-hang feeders for your transitory hummingbirds.

Keeping a journal is easy. You can use a plain spiral notebook, a blank journal purchased from a bookstore or a journal that was specifically created to record bird and wildlife sightings. If you are computer savvy, you can use a site such as *www.blogger.com*, to create your own wildlife blog – a daily journal of your wildlife sightings to share with fellow surfers on the worldwide web. However, if you choose to keep your wildlife journal, make sure you record enough information for it to be effective.

Always record the date and time of your habitat happenings. Include any contributing factors such as weather conditions or location in your yard. If you aren't sure of the specific wildlife species that you are observing, write down as much information as you can to help identify it later.

Digital cameras are excellent tools for the budding citizen scientist or backyard naturalist. Pictures of birds, butterflies and other forms of wildlife can be

**Coreopsis, stiff
verbena and
white water lilies
flourish in this
pond.**



taken for use in research in reference books, on the internet or even posting to wildlife forums to get the input of others.

Once you begin keeping a habitat journal, you have taken the first step to becoming a citizen scientist. You now have the opportunity to pass along your findings to others. Whether you share your findings quietly with your closest friends and family, on-line at gardening or wildlife forums or at weekly meetings of your favorite garden club, don't be reluctant to share. Teaching others about your new wildlife discoveries can be a valuable gift for both them and the environment.

If you think you find something truly unique, such as a bird or insect that you have never seen before, don't be reluctant to ask the experts. Start with your parish or state department of wildlife. If they can't help you, they may be able to steer you in the right direction for answers.

If your interest is specific to enhancing natural habitats for birds, there are several national specie counts that you can participate in once you begin to keep a wildlife journal. The Great Backyard Bird Count, The Christmas Bird Count and Project FeederWatch are all studies compiled primarily from information provided by individual citizens. Information about all of these programs, which are joint efforts between Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology, can be found at www.birdsource.org. A similar count for butterflies is carried out annually by the North American Butterfly Association and can be found online at www.naba.org.

There are many other reasons to keep a journal of your backyard habitat. Most importantly, it will encourage you to get to know the wild creatures that frequent your property on a more intimate level. Although a close-up view of the curiosities and miracles of nature can help encourage you to appreciate and protect it, some of you

may have never stopped to take that first look. A journal will help you to do so.

Observing backyard wildlife and nature also provides a perfect opportunity for contemplation and reflection. Your journal will provide a place to record those experiences as well. When recording in your habitat journal remember that not only could this be an leisure activity, but it may also have the potential to be helpful in governmental and scientific research.

Just remember that experiencing nature is more important than writing about it. Don't get so caught up in the writing and the research that you forget to just sit quietly and observe what is around you. "We need to replenish the native habitat that has been destroyed by development and disaster and we need to grow more food and have smaller lawns," said Bordelon. "If each person would do their part to return their yard to its most natural state, then perhaps we would see a positive effect not only in Louisiana's but also the world's ecosystem."

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, a famous author and Pulitzer Prize winner, once said "I do not understand how anyone can live without one small place of enchantment to turn to."

Perhaps this enchantment can be found in our own backyards. 🌿

Betsy Franz is freelance photographer and writer. She specializes in the "green" movement, nature and the environment.

Naturescaping 101

One essential purpose of naturescaping is for humans and wildlife to co-exist in one habitat that is mutually beneficial. Be sure to plant foliage in your yard that provides food and sustainable resources for insects and wildlife creatures. In designing a naturescaped yard, there are some important factors to consider.

Tips for Naturescaping

When designing a naturescaped yard, mimic the different kinds of habitats that you observe in nature. Accomplish this by using plants and foliage that have different textures and colors. By using a variety of plants native to your area, you will also increase the different kinds of insects and small animals that may come to your yard.

Try to use native plants in your naturescaped yard. Native plants require less maintenance and soil removal. They are also more likely to survive native diseases or organisms, which can help prevent the use of insecticides.

Use a variety of plants that can provide cover and food for insects through all seasons. One common trademark of a naturescaped yard is plant life that provides food to wildlife by bearing fruit, seeds, or flowers.

The sound of running water is an excellent way to attract wildlife to your yard. This sound can come from a small pond, bird feed, or mechanical water feature placed outdoors.

Naturescaped yards do not resemble a typical landscaped yard. Most naturescaped yards are very diverse with irregular patterns; just like nature!

Be creative and try not to allow the purpose of a naturescaped yard succumb to what is aesthetically pleasing to the ordinary eye. Naturescaped yards are beautiful in a non-traditional sense. Give yourself time to appreciate its uniqueness.



Benefits

Besides benefiting surrounding wildlife, a naturescaped yard has a variety of benefits including:

- Low yard maintenance
- Requires very little or no insecticide
- Requires less water than traditional landscaped yards

Unwanted Guests

Be careful! Although naturescaped yards may attract wildlife creatures, not all are friendly.

Be mindful of snakes and other animals that may pose a serious risk.



Strangers Next Door

A profile of Louisiana's most harmful invasive species



Nutria
(*Myocastor Coypus*)

Nutria are semi-aquatic rodents that belong to the Myocastoridae family. These pesky little creatures are native to South America and were first introduced to Louisiana as a result of the booming fur farm industry during the 1930s. Nutria are well-suited for movement on land, but have more agility in the water. Their diet consists of vegetation, which is why they have been so devastating to Louisiana's coastal areas. Ironically, in the 1940s, nutria were promoted as a biological agent for controlling aquatic weeds. However, today their ability to quickly reproduce coupled with its voracious appetite has been detrimental to Louisiana's marsh conservation efforts.

Once vegetation is eaten by nutria, the organic soils under the surface become exposed to erosion through tidal movement. As a result, if the area

does not revegetate quickly, the organic soil begins to erode.

Research shows that over 80,000 acres of Louisiana's coastal wetlands have been impacted by the nutrias' voracious appetite. To help combat this problem a market for nutria fur and meat was promoted to encourage hunters to target this booming population. Another initiative to combat this rodent is the Coastwide Nutria Control Program. Under this program the number of acres impacted by nutria dropped to 34,665 acres.

Although such reactive measures are underway, nutria damage continues to pose a problem to Louisiana's coastline. Estimates indicate that over 23,000 acres of wetlands are presently impacted by nutria. State and private agencies continue to work on controlling this invasive rodent.

Apple Snail

(*Pomacea insularium*)



Photo courtesy of Rachel Walley

The Island apple snail is an invasive aquatic species from South America. They are in the family of the largest living freshwater snails. These snails affect native fish and other aquatic organisms because of the large amount of plant material it can consume. Apple snails that escaped cultivation in southeast Asia have become many of those countries number one agricultural pest, and inflict major damage to rice farms.

Apple snails were first seen in Jefferson Parish in 2006. Since then they have been found in several water bodies in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary. They have the ability to live underwater and can repopulate very quickly. Evidence of apple snails can be seen not only by its destructive appetite, but also due to the bright pink eggs that they lay. The bright pink clusters, resembling bubble gum, can be seen on canal banks, drainage pipes and foliage.

Fire Ant

(*Solenopsis invicta*)

LDWF file photo



Fire ants are one of the worst insect pests to invade the United States. They are native to South America and tend to be aggressive when disturbed. The fire ant has caused major devastation to crops and livestock. It has flourished beyond control since its introduction in the 1930s. In the southeast United States, they have invaded over 275 million acres.

But in Louisiana, the spread of fire ants has been linked to the diminishing population of Loggerhead shrikes (*Lanius ludovicianus*) and some species of warblers.

To combat this tiny insect, specific insecticides are used that halt the queen ant's fertility. As the adult population dies, no new larvae are produced.



Photo courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Water Hyacinth

(*Eichhornia crassipes*)

The water hyacinth is one of Louisiana's most harmful exotic plants. It is native to South America and was first introduced to the United States as part of the 1884 Cotton Exposition held in New Orleans. This perennial, free-floating, herbaceous, aquatic plant has densely veined leaves that are thick, glossy and waxy in texture. The plant can grow several feet tall and form dense mats capable of covering several acres.

Water hyacinth tends to fill drainage canals, reservoirs and infest rivers. The water hyacinth has the ability to reproduce asexually. These plants can double its population within a two week period and spread over vast areas of water surfaces. Water hyacinth depletes the water's supply of oxygen, subsequently killing fish and other aquatic organisms.

The plant also creates a micro-habitat that is prime for mosquitoes and a variety of disease vectors.

These plants often invade bodies of water that have been impacted by human activity.

Water hyacinth is abundant in the Atchafalaya River Basin and has caused a major hindrance with water transportation. Although the water hyacinth is still a nuisance, they have been reduced by extensive spraying and harvesting programs. The introduction of insects from the *Neochetina* genus including two water hyacinth weevils (*Neochetina eichhorniae*), (*Neochetina bruchi*) and the water hyacinth moth (*Niphograpta albiguttalis*) have proved to show some success in controlling the exotic plant.



From top to bottom: Silver Carp, Grass Carp, Common Carp

Photo courtesy of Brac Salyers

Silver Carp

(*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*)

The silver carp is a species of freshwater cyprinid fish, or minnow, that is native to north and northeast Asia. This fish was first introduced to the United States in 1973, to control algae populations in aquaculture and wastewater facilities.

In Louisiana, the occurrence of silver carp is likely the result of carp that escaped from fish farms upstream in Arkansas.

These fish are filter feeders, meaning they do not eat other fish, but instead microscopic plankton in the water. They have the ability to exhaust available food supplies for other native filter feeding fish such as paddlefish and most species of larval fish. Because of their quick growth rates, and ability to produce massive numbers of eggs, they can greatly out-compete native fish species.

Due to their size and tendency to leap out of the water upwards to 10 feet, they have posed major risks to public safety and have caused serious motor boat accidents.



Hydrilla
(*Hydrilla verticillata*)

LDWF file photo

Hydrilla is an invasive species from South America. It was first introduced to the United States during the 1950s. Since then, infestations have quickly spread by boats and trailers. Once an aquatic site is infested, it becomes difficult to control.

Because of this plant's density, hydrilla interferes with a variety of water transportation operations and impedes irrigation structures. Efforts to control this nuisance plant have included the introduction of sterile carp that feed on this plant, lake drawdowns, and herbicide applications.

Treating hydrilla is very expensive. And while it may not be possible to rid the state of all hydrilla or other aquatic invasive species, herbicides and other biological controls are essential in reducing its devastating impact.



Giant Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*)

LDWF file photo

Giant salvinia is native to Brazil and considered as "the world's worst water weed." In the United States it was first reported in South Carolina in 1995. In 1998, it was first discovered in Toledo Bend Reservoir on the Texas-Louisiana border.

It has the ability to double in size within a period of 4 to 10 days. Giant salvinia has the potential to alter aquatic ecosystems in a several ways. Its expanding population can overgrow and replace native plants. Because of the thick mats this plants can produce it depletes oxygen from its water supply and subsequently, kills underlying fish. Giant salvinia has also been devastating to crawfish,

rice, and catfish farming operations.

Lake Bistineau, a 17,200 acre lake has been severely impacted by salvinia. Progress in controlling giant salvinia is being made through both biological and herbicide controls. With state funding, critical measures are now able being implemented to control salvinia and other invasive aquatic plants.

Herbicide applications and the introduction of salvinia weevils have shown great promise in controlling this plant. However, the best way in controlling the giant salvinia and other aquatic invasive plants is through prevention.

OUTDOOR JOURNAL

LDWF PARTNERS WITH BTNEP TO ASSESS APPLE SNAIL POPULATION ON PRIVATE LAND NORTH OF HOUMA

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) and the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) teamed up on April 22 to remove apple snails and assess the level of infestation on a landowner's property a few miles west of Shriever.

Apple snails are an invasive aquatic species from South America. The first Louisiana discovery was made in 2006 near Gretna. Since then they have been found in several water bodies within the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary.

Apple snails cause damage to the marshes and swamps by out-competing native species for resources because of their large size and ability to quickly populate.

LDWF Aquatic Nuisance Species Coordinator, Brac Salyers said, "Because of how fast this species could take hold, and the fact that we don't know the size of the problem we have right now, we'd rather act quickly than wait."

Apple snails were most likely introduced into Louisiana through aquarium owner releases. They have also been found in Florida and Texas. They are among the largest freshwater snails, ranging from 2 to 4 inches in width.

Most people will only see their bright pink egg clusters of 200 to 600 eggs attached to trees or other structures just above the waterline. Egg masses can simply be scraped off the structures and allowed to fall into water and subsequently



become infertile.

"The public can help us a lot by reporting any infestations they see, or removing the eggs themselves and dropping them in the water," said Salyers. "The biggest problem with the aquarium trade business is that

in most cases they don't inform the public of the potential problem of releasing these non-native species in the wild.

If consumed raw, apple snails can possibly transmit many diseases, including a deadly parasite called rat lungworm, to humans and other mammals. However, there is no risk of illness from touching egg masses or the shell, but gloves or other protective equipment should be used when removing the egg masses.

For more information, contact LDWF Aquatic Nuisance Species Coordinator, Brac Salyers at bsalyers@wlf.louisiana.gov or BTNEP Invasive Species Coordinator, Michael Massimi, at (985) 449-4714.

DEER TELEMETRY PROJECT SET TO END THIS YEAR Stakeholders Show Support With Financial Contribution

A two-year Louisiana deer telemetry study entitled "Population Characteristics of a White-tailed Deer Herd in Bottomland Hardwood Forest of South-central Louisiana" has entered its final year. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) and Louisiana State University (LSU) Agriculture Center have spearheaded the study with help from various contributors.

The primary objectives of the study are to assess range and movements of male and female white-tailed deer, evaluate age and sex-specific harvest rates of white-tailed deer and evaluate survival and causes of death among male and female white-tailed deer in a Louisiana bottomland hardwood forest.

Researchers are conducting the study on approximately 40,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forest located west of Baton Rouge and east of the Atchafalaya Basin. The study area is currently leased to more than 30 private hunting clubs. A. Wilbert's Sons L.L.C. is the primary landowner and coordinator and is also providing technical, logistical and housing support for the researchers.

The LSU School of Renewable Natural Resources' Michael J. Chamberlain, Ph.D., and Justin Thayer, LSU graduate student, are directing the study.

During the first year, of the 24 deer that were trapped and monitored, 12 deer (8 bucks and 4 does) are still being studied. The other 12 deer were either killed by hunters, died of disease or slipped their collars. So far this spring, 21 adult bucks and 3 adult does have been trapped and collared.

Several groups have stepped forward to help fund the study for the final year. The South Louisiana Branch of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) donated another \$2,500 this year to bring their total to \$9,170 donated to the two-year study. The Acadia Sportsmen's League donated another \$500 this year to match the \$500 they donated last year. The Bercham Holding Company Inc. also donated \$500 this year to bring their total to \$1,000. Rubicon LLC was a first-time donor, contributing \$500 to the study.

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation matched \$2,000 of the total amount donated this year to bring their total matching contribution to \$4,000. Additionally, the Bayou State Bowhunters Association gave \$1,000 and Acoustic Specialties gave \$500 last year to the study.

If you are interested in contributing financially to the project, please contact Scott Durham, LDWF Deer Program manager, at 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70898 or by phone at 225-765-2351. A fund held by the South Louisiana QDMA has been established to accept the tax-deductible donations.

NEARLY 600 POUNDS OF TRASH REMOVED BY VOLUNTEERS FROM A BATON ROUGE TRAIL AND CREEK

Over 30 volunteers removed 584 pounds of garbage from a hiking trail and Dawson's Creek on Saturday, March 29.

The volunteers covered close to one-half of a square mile starting at the Dawson's Creek Bridge on Quail Drive out side of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Headquarters building. They followed the creek downstream to the end of the walking trail covering all the LDWF land in between.

"We found a television, Christmas lawn decorations, old gas tanks and the disturbing list goes on and on," said LDWF Inland Fisheries biologist and volunteer Brac Salyers. "We wanted to do this cleanup to get the trail in better shape for department and public use and to improve the creek's environment."

Volunteers consisted of LDWF employees and spouses, Boy Scouts Troop 478, American Wetland Conservation Corps, Louisiana Hiking Club, Red Stick Fly Fishers and Louisiana State University students.

Dawson's Creek runs from South Acadian Thruway (alongside Outback and I-10) to the LDWF Headquarters building and joins in with the drainage from the University Lakes becoming Ward Creek Diversion Canal. The canal then becomes Bayou Manchac, eventually feeding into the Amite River and finally Lake Maurepas.

LDWF would like to thank all of the volunteers that helped with this important task. After the success of this cleanup, the volunteers said they would like to schedule more cleanups in the near future.



LDWF TARGETS LAKE BISTINEAU FOR AQUATIC PLANT CONTROL

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Inland Fisheries Division is working to regain control of aquatic plants on Lake Bistineau in northwest Louisiana. The goal is to kill a significant amount of giant salvinia and restore normal use and aesthetics of the lake for residents and visitors.



"We have brought numerous resources to the lake this week in an effort to open up the surface of the water body for all who spend time on the lake," said LDWF Secretary Robert Barham. "The treatment of invasive aquatics will remain a major commitment for this agency in the months and years ahead."

LDWF's Aquatic Plant Control Program is utilizing a portion of the \$6.4 million allocated in the 2007-08 fiscal year to aggressively combat a major threat to the state's waterways. Seventeen two-man spray crews are on Lake Bistineau as part of the five-day herbicide application project. Applications to floating mats of giant salvinia utilize Aquamaster, a glyphosate herbicide. The EPA-approved systemic herbicide translocated through the plant and results should be noted in a week to 10 days.

The 17,200-acre lake just south of Doyline is a popular fishing spot for bass and crappie with private dwellings and Lake Bistineau State Park offering lakeside accommodations. It is anticipated that the herbicide application will be followed by a summer lake drawdown.

For more information about LDWF's efforts with aquatic plant control go to www.wlf.louisiana.gov.

AGENTS of Change

the evolving role of wildlife and fisheries enforcement agents

Tips for Boating Safety By Sgt. Rachel Zechenelly

Summertime in Louisiana: The kids are out of school. The fishing is hot and so is the weather. It is the time of year that thousands of recreational boaters can not wait to arrive. Knee boards are dusted off, tubes are aired up, and ice chests are pulled out of storage to be filled with ice, drinks, and sandwiches for the highly anticipated day on the water. Of all the fun water sport items prepped for the voyage, the two most important elements that need to be prepped are knowledge and life jackets.

In 2007, 30 Louisianans lost their lives participating in one of the most popular recreational activities in Louisiana—recreational boating. One of the most significant pieces of equipment that probably could have saved nearly 75 percent of those fatalities is a personal flotation device, also referred to as a life jacket. Most people are aware that wearing a seat belt can save lives. So much so, that Louisiana made it law that everyone has to wear it while in a car. A life jacket can save lives in a boat much like a seat belt saves lives in a car. But it is not a law to wear it while underway except for personal watercraft operators and passengers and children 12 and under. Operators of vessels should encourage all passengers to wear a United States Coast Guard approved life jacket while underway. Nationwide, the most consistent statistic over the last few years is that of all boating fatalities, nearly 80 percent of people drowned and of those 80 percent that drowned, almost all would have survived if they had been wearing a life jacket. If such an inexpensive piece of equipment can save a life why would a vessel operator or

passenger not wear it? Some would say they are not very fashionable, but manufacturers are coming out with new styles all the time. Some say they are too uncomfortable. Again, manufacturers have addressed this issue with a wide variety of inflatable type life jackets that are neither uncomfortable nor cumbersome. If cost is an issue, take a ride to the local discount superstore and check out how inexpensive a comfortable and stylish life jacket costs. In reality, there are no real logical arguments not to wear a life jacket. So just WEAR IT!

Another important preparation before heading out on a voyage is to review the “Louisiana Rules of the Road.” Most accidents in Louisiana are collisions with another vessel or with a fixed object. Life jackets save lives when people enter the water unexpectedly, usually from collision with a vessel or object. Logic would dictate that if an operator could prevent the collision from the outset, lives would be saved. *The Louisiana Rules of the Road* for navigation were made into

law in 2003 and could be described as the traffic laws of the waterways. They provide the operator with tools to operate safely when encountering other vessels and are designed to prevent collisions between vessels. When vessels operators are on Louisiana waterways they are responsible for knowing and following the rules of the road much the same as they are responsible for knowing and following driving laws when operating a vehicle.

Vessel operators are highly encouraged to take a boating education class that will not only cover navigation rules and boating laws in Louisiana, but also cover safety equipment, boating emergencies, risk management, trailering, aids to navigation and much more. Be safe, responsible, and knowledgeable, and boating in Louisiana will be an enjoyable time for all citizens!

For more information on boating, visit our website at www.wlf.louisiana.gov.



Photo courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard

Shrimp and Corn Bisque

- 1-1/2 sticks butter
- 1/2 c. bell peppers, diced
- 1/2 c. yellow onions, diced
- 1 Tbsp. garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. chicken base
- 1/2 tsp. white pepper
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne
- 2 lbs. medium size shrimp
- 1 bunch green onion
- 1 can cream of shrimp soup
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can cream style corn
- * Salt to taste.

Saute vegetables in butter until soft. Add shrimp and seasonings. Saute for two minutes, then add remaining ingredients. Cook on low to medium heat for 30 minutes.

Recipe courtesy of Harrington's Cafe in Baton Rouge.



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